

# Weekly Market Bulletin

State of New Hampshire  
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## From Your Commissioner...

### The Commissioner's Nose Job, One Year Later

Nearly 14 months have passed since I wrote my column on the commissioner's skin cancer surgery. With that column, and with the obvious signs in the first months following surgery, I stepped into an additional role as poster child for this all-too common agricultural occupational health hazard. Half a dozen individuals have told me they sought medical attention because of my column or my speaking about skin cancer, and had thus gotten earlier treatment for their cancers. A tree farmer asked me to repeat the information in my column each year.

One out of seven people in the United States will develop some form of skin cancer, making it the most common form of cancer. The most common types are basal cell and squamous cell, which is more likely to spread and be life-threatening. The less-common melanoma can be deadly. According to the National Farm Medicine Center in Marshfield, Wisconsin, because people who work in agriculture tend to work many hours in the sun, they have a greater risk of getting skin cancer than the general population.

Sunlight damages skin and this damage can lead to skin cancer. Both too much sun, resulting in sunburn, and the total amount of sun a person receives over the years can cause skin cancer. The key message here: A stitch in time saves nine. And protecting children and youth is extra-important.

One serious sunburn can increase risk by as much as 50%. But the damage is cumulative, and total exposure is also a factor. Fair-skinned people like me have a higher risk, but people who tan or have darker complexions can also develop skin cancer.

Staying out of the sun is the best prevention. But that's not an option for most people in farming. The National Farm Medicine Center offers three steps to reduce the risk of skin cancer:

—Limit time in the sun during the 'short-shadow' hours between 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, by scheduling your work to earlier and later hours in the day, or by using tractors and equipment with cabs or shade.

—Wear hats and clothing that shade your face and cover the body—Tightly woven long-sleeved shirts and pants, hats with three-inch or greater brims (baseball caps leave the tips of your ears and back of your neck exposed to the sun's rays), and sunglasses with UV protection. My plastic surgeon says tee shirts offer little protection. UV radiation can damage skin, even if there is no burning or tanning.

—Apply sunscreen with UVA and UVB protection that is rated sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or higher. Apply 20-30 minutes before heading outdoors, and reapply every two hours—more frequently if you are perspiring heavily or get wet.

Skin cancer has many faces. It can occur on any part of the body, but develops most frequently on areas that are exposed to sun. Watch for any changes to the skin that don't heal or go away within a couple of months—and then seek medical attention. Here are the kinds of changes to look for:

- New mole (that looks different from your other moles)
- New red or darker color flaky patch that may be a little raised
- New flesh-colored firm bump
- Change in the size, shape, color, or feel of a mole
- Sore that does not heal

In your commissioner's case, it started as a pimple-like spot that became a small waxy sore that occasionally bled, and did not heal. I am happy to report that my treatment has been completely successful. I get screenings every six months to make sure no new spots develop, and there have been none.

**Lorraine Merrill, Commissioner**